

0402
306.48
0591R /M

Speaking in Public

notes for community leaders
no.7

**Ministry of Community and
Social Services**



**Youth and Recreation Branch
Mowat Block, 12th Floor**



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024 with funding from
University of Toronto

<https://archive.org/details/notesforcommunit07mini>

What is effective speaking?

Good public speaking is simply the art of good conversation carried a step or two beyond the usual. It is largely through the spoken word that we communicate with each other, develop understanding, exchange knowledge and find mutually acceptable goals. Through effective public speaking we can encourage teach, entertain and inspire others.



If we look for the principles that are the basis of intelligent conversation, we will find the principles of effective public speaking. In chatting with friends we speak naturally, directly and spontaneously. Whether we are standing or sitting we move about quite freely. Our conversation becomes serious when we have an idea to convey and a reason to convey it. We are convinced that the idea is sound and we try to present it clearly and logically. We have no difficulty in expressing the idea in simple words because we believe in it.

When we talk in a small group such as our family, describing an experience or attempting to persuade them that some idea of ours is a good one, we use simple, direct language and we look at every member of the group as we talk. In a larger group, such as a club, most conversations are on the same basis, except that we are likely to concentrate on a single subject of common interest. The members of the club group direct their thinking toward the special purpose for which they are meeting and choose their words more carefully than they do in casual conversation.

In speaking to an audience all these principles of good conversation are followed and, in addition, we must be sure to speak loudly enough for everyone to hear. Probably we will assume a little more dignity than in everyday conversation and we will guard out statements carefully lest we be quoted.

Effective Speaking then is simply

persuasive conversation developed and adapted
to fit the occasion, further a special purpose, and
suit the people who listen

Since all of us practice conversation every day in chatting with our friends or conferring with our families, we already possess the fundamental skills of public speaking. We need only concern ourselves with the slightly altered techniques that apply to making sure that we are understood by a larger group of people.

The Occasion

Most occasions call for short speeches.

Quite often the members of community organizations have little or no time to prepare their remarks beforehand. When they contribute to informal discussion, or speak to a motion at a formal meeting, they must speak spontaneously, and trust to conviction and the clearness of their thinking to put across the ideas they want to express.

In other circumstances the members will have time to prepare their remarks when they are asked to

- make announcements
- introduce speakers
- thank speakers
- present gifts
- accept gifts
- propose a toast
- answer a toast
- nominate a candidate for office
- welcome new members or groups
- say farewell on retiring or leaving a group

Once in a while the circumstances will call for a longer, more detailed talk that requires a period of intensive study and preparation. Officers, committee chairmen, or spokesmen for study groups must prepare carefully and talk at some length when they

- give information or explanation to a group
- take part in a panel discussion
- present their viewpoints in a symposium
- offer inspiration or entertainment.

How to Prepare the Address

There is a formula attributed to an old southern preacher which is worth remembering because it sets the pattern for most speeches:

First, I tells 'em what I'm goin' to tell 'em; then I tells 'em; then I tells 'em what I told 'em.

The particular occasion will determine the time, the formalities, the amount of preparation, and the length of the presentation; but every speech, however short or long, has an INTRODUCTION a BODY and a CONCLUSION.



The BODY of the speech is usually worked out first.

As you begin to prepare what you are going to say, ask yourself these three questions

What is the subject, not just the title, of my speech?

What particular points (not more than four) do I want to bring out?

Why are these points directed at this audience



With this basic information before you, write down all the information at your command to support the points you have chosen. Also write down any arguments you know of which are opposed to your proposition and prepare a rebuttal. Take as much time as possible for thinking out your arguments at this stage. If there is time, take a week or two for reflection — it will pay big dividends.

- NOW
- arrange all this material in order for presentation. Your original points, each with its supporting material, must be arranged in a logical sequence. The discussion of each point should lead naturally into the next.
 - Begin the refining process by measuring all your statements against your answers to the question "Why are these points directed at this audience?"
 - See that all your statements are within the understanding of your audience. If you are not certain they will be understood, delete them or rewrite them in a simpler form.
 - Check for double meanings. Guard against unfamiliar big words and "jargon" (the special vocabulary used by people thoroughly familiar with a particular subject, but meaningless to others).
 - Remove any statements which, on second thought, appear uncouth or in poor taste.

THEN, if it is your first speech, write it all out, not as you would write an article for publication, but conversationally as you would talk.

Now you have the BODY of your speech. To this must be added an INTRODUCTION and a CONCLUSION.

Many successful speakers prepare the conclusion before the introduction.

A good conclusion might be a summary of what has been said, a challenge to action, an appeal for further consideration, an illustration to emphasize the main points, or any combination of these. After you have decided on the form you wish to use, work it out so that it ends with a strong, positive statement. Don't weaken the climax with any further words, not even "thank you" unless you have asked for permission to speak.

When you have completed the development of the body, and the climax or conclusion, you are ready to think about the introduction.

The introduction should be short, and it has two purposes. It should put the audience at ease, and it should let them know what the speech is about. For beginners it is wise to write out and memorize the first two or three sentences. This assures a confident beginning. Many experienced speakers use a short phrase or sentence which the listeners may think of as the topic. This is included in the introduction and may be repeated during the course of the speech.

The Short Speech for a Particular Occasion

A short speech is sometimes more difficult to write than a long one. To be effective, short talks need careful refining. Every word must count.

The speaker must keep in mind the occasion of his speech, the audience to whom he talks, the group for whom he speaks, the facts that need to be given, and above all, the time allotted. He should err on the side of brevity, if at all.

Here are some points to remember in connection with the occasions for short speeches listed on page 2.

To make an announcement:

- give all the detail needed;
- be precise about time, place, and any requirements;
- allow the audience time to absorb and remember;
- avoid confusing the facts with irrelevant detail or unnecessary chatter.

To introduce a speaker

- mention the subject of the address, and why it has been chosen;
- say why the topic is important to this particular audience;
- say why this speaker has been chosen;
- give his name and something about him, without too much praise;
- leave the topic itself to the speaker.

To thank a speaker:

- offer thanks on behalf of the audience, not of yourself;
- thank him for what he has given in terms of information and ideas, entertainment, inspirational values;
- thank him for his personal sacrifice of time, energy, etc. ;
- refrain from repeating the speech and from expressing your personal appreciation.

To present a gift:

- refer to the occasion;
- remind the audience of the achievements of the recipient;
- express goodwill on behalf of the audience;
- present the gift.

To accept a gift:

- express thanks for yourself, or on behalf of the group you represent;
- mention in some appropriate way the debt owed by you or your group to those who are presenting the gift.

To propose a toast:

- refer to the significance of the occasion;
- pay a suitable tribute;
- speak on behalf of the audience;
- be sure to have the audience's full attention for the proposal of the toast.

To answer a toast:

- say "thank you";
- share something of yourself that is appropriate.

To nominate a candidate for office:

- name your candidate;
- describe the office to be filled;
- give the qualifications of your candidate;
- move formal nomination;
- respect the time and the requirements of the proceedings (it is easy to overdo a good thing here).

To welcome a person or group

- mention the significance of the occasion;
- express the pleasure and goodwill of the audience;
- share with the audience something about the visitor(s).

On retiring or leaving a group:

express thanks for help and co-operation;
give a brief resumé of the things accomplished during your
term of association;
make reference to the future.

Presenting the speech:

- Having written your speech, read it and re-read it until you are completely familiar with the sequence of thought.
- Memorize only the beginning and the ending
- Then write brief reminders of the important points in their proper order on cards or small sheets of paper. These notes should be in ink, and if possible, printed in letters large enough to be read at arm's length.
- It is also wise to number the cards.
- Be sure to take the cards with you when you go to speak!

Interesting and well-prepared material can be made even more acceptable to the audience if the speaker keeps in mind a few points about the delivery. A well-known, short comment states them well: Stand up, speak up, and shut up!

When you are introduced: take a little time to move to the centre of the platform, or make some natural gesture such as moving an object if you are at a table. Then look at your audience for two or three seconds while you take a few deep breaths. That will help you throw off the sudden nervousness of the moment and create an atmosphere of respect and anticipation in the audience.

Address those present: Use the appropriate form ("Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen", etc.) and speak clearly and distinctly. If some remark in the introduction or unusual situation in the meeting can be commented upon you will have the advantage of getting used to the acoustics of the room, and the audience, before you begin the text of your speech.

Make sure that those in the back row can hear what you are saying. Never begin with an apology such as "I'm not much of a speaker" or "I don't know why I was called upon".

Look at your audience: The audience should feel that you are talking to them. Several methods are used by experienced speakers. Some choose a few people who seem to be listening attentively, scattered throughout the audience, and talk to each of them at different times. Other speakers focus their eyes about three-quarters of the way back and let them move from side to side as they talk. Still others will talk to the back row, but occasionally emphasize an important statement by directing it to the people immediately in front of them.

Speak up! You must speak loudly enough for everyone in the audience to hear you but, at the same time, there must be enough variation in the pitch of your voice to avoid monotony. Nearly everyone uses three inflections of the speaking voice, a low, grave quality which expresses seriousness or sadness, a middle range for ordinary conversation, and a higher pitch that expresses happiness, excitement or indignation.

The medium range will be used for most of your speech of course, but the other two should be used where appropriate in order to add interest. If you have an important message to put across, lower the pitch of your voice (not the volume). If you have an exciting statement to make, use the higher tone. We do these things naturally in ordinary conversation but sometimes forget to make use of them when we increase the volume of our voices for the benefit of a large audience.

Enunciate clearly: We all fall into bad habits of enunciation in the hurry of every-day life. We fail to open our mouths and we slur over syllables. Listeners soon tire of a speaker if they cannot understand every word. On the other hand, we do not sound natural or interesting if every syllable is equally stressed; that sounds stiff and forced. Good speech has a pattern of varied stresses like music. We should practise speaking with a relaxed jaw making full use of the tongue, lips and teeth. If the mouth is open the words will be projected at full volume toward the audience and will not emerge muffled and dim as they do through almost-clenched teeth and taut face muscles.

Watch your posture: Proper breathing is of great importance in good voice production. Use your diaphragm and fill the lower part of your lungs. A speaker who uses only his chest and upper lungs for breathing will grow short of breath. This will make him nervous and tense. The consequent constriction of the muscles will cause further shortness of breath. He may blame the shortness of breath on his nervousness, but poor posture is the real cause.

Speaking a little more slowly than you do in ordinary conversation also helps you to breathe more deeply and naturally. It will also make it easier for the audience to understand you.

Stand in a relaxed and comfortable position but avoid any appearance of listlessness. Keep your feet together, a little apart, or one ahead of the other, whichever is comfortable. Good posture will make control of your breathing easier. Some people find it helpful to check their posture before a full-length mirror.

Good posture will help you to look keen and alert, and give the audience the feeling that you are pleased to be speaking to them. You should not grin, of course, but they will appreciate you if they feel you are enthusiastic and sincere. Don't be afraid to move about a little once in a while. You should always feel free to use your hands and arms to emphasize a point or to look at your notes. Be sure your movements are natural. Freedom of movement will make your talk seem easy and conversational if it is not overdone.

End on a strong note: Make the last statement of your speech sound as strong and positive as it seemed when you wrote it. Remember that it is not logical to say "thank you" unless you have asked for permission to speak.

The Points to Remember

- Careful preparation is the basis of good presentation
- Talk to your audience — not at them
- Think of the audience as your friends and keep them with you.
Speaking in public is an extension of ordinary conversation.
- Use words that this particular audience will understand easily.
The language must be clear, and the voice loud enough to be heard.
- Make sure of your pronunciations by using a dictionary
- Correct posture, relaxed and comfortable, is essential for adequate breathing and good voice production.
- Accept interruptions graciously.
- Be humorous only if you can be appropriate. Tell stories or jokes that support your argument or apply to the immediate situation.
- Use your own personality — BE YOURSELF

Some Hints about Practice

There are two principle rules for increasing your effectiveness in public speaking:

- Learn to listen objectively and critically to every speaker you hear, particularly yourself.
- Get as much practice as possible

Take every opportunity to speak that comes your way. Read aloud stories, poetry and your own writing to imaginary audiences. Read and talk to a tape recorder, and listen to yourself. Read and talk to your family and friends, asking for their criticism.

- Make notes of your conversations with friends. Then, when you have time, criticize and develop them.
- For practice in extemporaneous speaking, put a number of topics that interest you on slips of paper. Draw one from a hat and talk briefly about it to your family.
- Read carefully newspaper and magazine articles and then retell the main points in the form of short talks.
- Criticize your own speaking posture and gestures in a full-length mirror.
- Read aloud other people's speeches, trying to give them all the appropriate inflections of voice, and changes of pace.

Most people find it easier to follow a program of study when they work with a group. Classes in public speaking are offered in many communities. Speakers' clubs are often organized to meet the need for group study. Here are a few suggestions for practice in groups.

- Give three-minute talks on interesting books or movies
- Take sides on current political issues.
- Promote the campaign of a local agency such as the community chest.
- Describe favourite hobbies or sports.
- Give directions, extemporaneously, for reaching a particular place, for cooking a favourite dish, for carrying out a craft or business technique.
- The whole group might draw up a list of topics and assign them by lot to individual members for preparation and presentation.
- Group study offers opportunities to develop discussion techniques. Four or five members might discuss a subject apart from the others and then one of them might report the discussion to all the members of the class or club.

For Further Reading

In this short article it has been impossible to go fully into subjects like voice control, the literary aspects of public speaking and many others. The following books will be found useful by those who wish to pursue the subject:

The Art of Speaking Made Simple — W. R. Gondin & E. W. Mammen. (Made-Simple Books Inc. , 220 - 5th Ave. , New York. American Book-Stratford Press, New York, 1955)

How to Speak in Public — C. W. Wright (Crown Publishers, New York, 1953 , In Canada: Ambassador Books, 370 Alliance Ave. , Toronto)

How to Write a Speech — Edward J. Hegarty. (McGraw-Hill of Canada Ltd. , 253 Spadina Road, Toronto 4, 1951)

New Treasury of Stories for Every Speaking and Writing Occasion — Jacob M. Braude. (Prentice-Hall, Inc. Englewood Cliffs, N. J. 1959)

The Process of Communication — David K. Berlo. (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc. New York, 1960)

The Successful Speaker's Handbook — Herbert V. Prochnow. (Prentice-Hall Inc. , New York, 1951)

Working Wonders with Words — Wilfred Womersley. (J. M. Dent & Sons Canada Ltd. , 224 Bloor St. W. , Toronto 1951)

